

THE ATHENÆUM.

VOL. I.] YALE-COLLEGE, SATURDAY, JULY 9, 1814. [N^o. 12.

Neque cuiquam tam statim claram ingenium est, ut possit emergere; nisi illi materia, occasio, fautor etiam, commendatorque contingat.

PLIN. EPIST.

THE VAGRANT.

No. XII.

TO THE VAGRANT.

SIR,

THERE is nothing about which we hear or read more than the difficulties and dangers which an author has to encounter upon his first appearance before the public. If we are to believe authors themselves, (and surely they are the only persons who can give us the necessary light on the subject,) they fortify their minds against disappointment and success to a degree which can be found in no other class of men. They provide, and one would think effectually, against being depressed by the one, or elevated by the other. If their productions are neither read nor praised, they do not of course conclude that this will be the case a hundred years hence, for it is very seldom that a person becomes very famous until he has been dead for some time. I should believe all this to be true were it not for one very

material circumstance—their practice usually contradict their precepts; they are elevated by prosperity and cast down by adversity like other men.

That the first appearance of an author is rather hazardous than otherwise, & therefore disagreeable, I have ~~no~~ doubt; but if all this is anticipated it appears to me that the *cacoethes scribendi* must have taken very rank hold of a person if he did not expect some pleasure to counterbalance his pain. And I cannot help thinking that in many instances they are not unwilling to enhance their own merits while they thus complain of the obstacles they have to surmount; for they are doubtless conscious that the glory of an exploit consists chiefly in the difficulty of its accomplishment, and that even to fail in a good cause entitles them, if not to the praise of talents, at least to that of worth.

It appears to me that an author in this situation resembles in many particulars a lover in the different stages

of courtship and marriage—and this, however the race of scribblers may affect to disdain the comparison.—One of their own tribe has said *licet magna componere parris*, or I should never have had the audacity to form a comparison between two things differing so much in importance from one another.

I think it is Addison who remarks, and I dare say that his friend Socrates would agree with him, that *Courtship is the pleasantest part of a man's life*; and I strongly suspect that they found this true by their own experience. So I think that an author is never more happy than when he has prepared his maiden production for the press. Revolving in his mind the applause which he is certain it will obtain, the remarks it will excite, and more than any of these, *the cash with which it will enrich him*, (not a small consolation even if his work should fail,) he cannot but look forward with joyful expectations to that period when he will be allotted a niche in the Temple of Fame.—Like a lover, he puts on his best face, mixes with what he says a little spice of flattery; and as Chesterfield advises gallants never to contradict a lady, so he takes good care not to contradict the public opinion.

Thus his production makes its appearance, and *Marriage* has succeeded to *Courtship*. By accommodating his own to the public opinion, he acquires a temporary renown.—While he is extolled to the skies by those who happen to think as he does—by those who do not, he is complimented with a formal answer. His wishes are now gratified, the charm is dissolved, and the honours he so laboriously sought, are profusely bestowed. This, however, is nothing but the *Author's Honey*

Moon; and ten chances to one, the world will soon begin to fret and scold, or, which is more probable as well as more painful, treat him with indifference or neglect.

As with the Lover, so it is with the Author; the *Honey Moon* is sometimes longer and sometimes shorter. Wives are commonly variable, capricious things, but not more so than the public; and both, so long as they are indulged in their freaks, are good natured. Husbands, however, after indulging their wives in their notions for a great length of time, find it necessary, if they would live in peace, to have an opinion of their own: thus one or the other must submit. Writers also are fond of independence, and gradually depart from the public taste. Both, therefore, like ministers of State who are not sufficiently obeisant, fall into disgrace.—Sometimes, indeed, it is the case that these disagreements between man and wife are amicably adjusted, and both parties for a season live together on good terms; this, however, from the force of Jealousy and other causes, continues only a short time; divorces usually follow, sooner or later, marriages thus hastily contracted. The author too, it is possible, may be reinstated in the public favour, but it is not long, generally, before they become sworn enemies.

But a word respecting those whose labours are crowned with lasting success.

It is a common observation that those matrimonial connexions which flow from pure, disinterested love and reciprocal affection, are usually happy and lasting, while those which originate in pecuniary hopes or other interested motives seldom continue long, and are miserable. This remark I would thus apply to the au-

Thor. The man who takes up his pen with disinterested views, with an intention to improve, refine and polish society, who is equally destitute of that fulsome adulation which is inconsistent with rational and manly independence, and that cynical asperity which is the offspring of a sour and irritable disposition, will sooner or later rank high in public estimation—his fame, instead of varying with every change of sentiment, will be durable and lasting.—He, on the other hand, who writes for a party, and seizes the opportunity when men are warm and prejudiced, to work upon their passions, will be looked upon, when the tumult of the times has subsided, and obstinacy yields to reason, as a sycophant or hireling—a dupe to prejudice, or an unprincipled demagogue.

I could never sufficiently admire the spirit, although the method was ridiculous, with which Courtship was carried on in the famous days of knight-errantry---where the lover, before he could obtain his mistress, was compelled to undergo, for a great length of time, the greatest fatigues, and attempt deeds which nothing but the power of *Love* and not even *that* in every instance, with its *omnipotent* power, could enable him to accomplish. This he was compelled to do that he might prove himself to be the protector of the oppressed, of females particularly, and the friend of mankind. The length of time was greatly protracted that he might evince the constancy of his affection—and the scheme would have been faultless, for what I can see, had it not been too often true that these bold and adventurous gallants failed to obtain that for which they had so patiently laboured and suffered. We are, as has often been

remarked, apt to esteem that too lightly which is obtained without labour; and this is the case with wives as with every thing else. There is nothing we admire so much in the character of Tom Jones as the constancy of his affection for Sophia amidst poverty, sickness and sorrow; had he obtained her hand sooner or on easier terms, we never should consent so willingly to their union.

This should encourage rather than depress those who take up their pens for the purpose of improving mankind. They should remember that it reflects much more honour on their characters that they are esteemed after they have perished, when the prejudices of the world are thrown aside, than that, when alive, they receive the *temporary*, inconsiderate huzzas of the interested multitude. That eulogy which is the offspring of sudden joy, and immediately dies away, is of little value when compared with the constant and sober praise of disinterested and impartial judges.

I have a friend whose name is Didasculus. In his youth he possessed all the advantages which wealth could bestow, and took a degree at the university when quite young.—He had read the Classics with great attention and could bring allusions from them on almost every subject. Mottos, with which Authors are so apt to display their learning, were always at hand to answer his purpose. By performing the tour of Europe with an able instructor, he had accumulated many facts, much geographical and historical knowledge, many acquaintances of a literary character, and a facility of expression which few possess. By constantly reading the praises of a life devoted to learning, his vanity was excited, and in

the prime of life he determined to turn author. His talents were rather superficial than solid, calculated to please rather than instruct, to fascinate rather than to reform. Fond of popular applause, the work he first attempted, was such as to obtain it : it was written in an agreeable manner, with nothing very original and nothing very important. It attached no prevailing folly, exposed no individual to shame, flattered the public judgment, and when published was sought with great avidity and much praised. Didasculus had now reached the summit of his glory—he was caressed and applauded by all. This, however, was nothing but his *Honey Moon*. The work soon grew out of notice and disappeared with the circumstances which gave it birth ; the author and the production were soon forgotten.

Being neglected as an author, Didasculus has nothing to resort to but an Author's consolation. He repeats to himself the old story of the perverted taste of the public, the treachery of friends, the jealousy of rivals, the envy of inferiors, and the malice of enemies. He remembers that even Milton himself slumbered about half a century in comparative obscurity until his beauties and excellencies were exhibited by Addison. He consoles himself that his fate is to be like Milton's, and whenever a fit of the hypo overtakes him finds great relief in repeating the following passage,

*Ultima semper
Expectanda dies homini, dicique beatus
Ante obitum nemo supremaque funera debet,
But no frail man, however great or high,
Can be concluded blest before he die.*

The character of Didasculus is by no means a singular one, but I hope

that it will not, on that account, be of less use either to Lovers or Authors.

I am, sir,

Your humble servant.

THE DISCOURAGEMENTS TO A LIFE OF VIRTUE; AN EASTERN TALE.

IN the morning of life, the hand of instruction had moulded the heart of Hamet to virtue ; and as the fleeting years of time stole imperceptibly over his head, he became more and more strengthened in the truths which he had early been taught : he panted for the hour of manhood, and murmured at the slowness of time, which detained him from the execution of those schemes of benevolence and virtue, which he had planned and cherished in secret,—which glowed in his imagination by day, and stole over his mind in airy visions by night.

The period at length arrived, and Hamet beheld himself in the prime of life, surrounded by every worldly blessing which his heart could desire. "Now," he exclaimed, "will I indulge in those pleasures for which I have so long sighed. I shall now be happy, for my life shall be spent in endeavouring to make others so."

He soon eagerly set about realizing his schemes of benefiting mankind ; and the day beheld him, with indefatigable diligence, executing what he had planned amidst the silent hours of the night. His house was the refuge of the needy and unfortunate : Want and Misery were never known to turn from his gates unrelieved : the poor found in Hamet a kind and generous benefactor ; his heart sympathized with their misfortunes, and his wealth was poured forth at the call of the wretched.

But Hamet was not content to confine himself to the relief of those who solicited his bounty : he had been taught, that the duties of benevolence and charity were not fulfilled by giving to those only who asked ; but in seeking for the unfortunate, and shedding the balm of consolation upon the modest and retired sufferer. He therefore busied himself in searching out the abodes of want and misery ; and he was often seen, like a guardian angel, bending over the bed of age or sickness, or dissipating the sorrow which hung around the hovels of wretchedness. Grief vanished at his approach ; peace and happiness followed his steps. Where Hamet appeared, there the mourner was seen to smile ; and the broken heart and wounded spirit once more beheld their prospects gilded by hope and joy.

Such was the life of Hamet—such was his course of virtue : but happiness fled far from him. He was virtuous—he was benevolent ; but still he was unhappy. In a road which he expected to find strewed with the roses of happiness and pleasure, he was wounded by the thorns of disappointment and ingratitude. He had been taught that happiness was the sure concomitant of virtue ; he had, in his youth, fed his imagination with the pleasing prospect, that public approbation would be the reward of a life devoted to the good of mankind. He now awoke, as from a dream, and found his vision of bliss entirely vanished. Instead of having his designs seconded with spirit and cordiality by the world, he found it cold and indifferent ; he beheld mankind immersed in their selfish pursuits, solely bent upon their own welfare, and ignorant of the wants of those around them. If he solicited

their assistance for the relief of the wretched, his plans were received without interest ; the pictures of misery which he held up to their view, were regarded with listless inattention ; or if a spirit of benevolence glowed in their breasts, it was like the spark from the flint, kindled on a bed of snow—extinguished in a moment.

From these, Hamet turned with a heavy heart ; on a sudden, he beheld the sphere of his usefulness, comparatively, dwindled to a span, and learnt, by painful experience, how little any one, alone, with the best intentions, can accomplish. But this was not the only discouragement Hamet had to contend with ; mankind were not content to withhold their aid : the cold and cautious scoffed at his schemes, as wild and romantic ; while the base and sordid, who felt humbled at his superiority, threw every obstacle in his way, and secretly counteracted his designs. The voice of defamation and slander were also raised against him ; he beheld, with grief and astonishment, his most virtuous actions misconstrued, and the vilest motives attributed to his most innocent conduct. Hamet, where he expected to find his conduct the most warmly approved of, was surprised to hear it condemned by the voice of censure. Ingratitude, too, whose sting infixes the deepest wound in the generous breast, reared her snaky crest : the lips which he had moistened, when parched and shrivelled, were often first opened to breathe the poisonous breath of slander upon their benefactor.

Discouraged and disappointed, Hamet now discovered, that a life of virtue did not insure him the praise of the world, and that innocence was

no shield against calumny. His hopes were blasted; his dreams of happiness and usefulness were vanished: in the bitterness of his heart, he murmured at the dispensations of Providence, which could suffer virtue to go unrewarded, and permit schemes of benevolence to prove abortive.

Stung by his disappointments, and made restless by his cares, he wandered forth far from the haunts of men, resolving to brood over his misfortunes in secret, and vent his complaints in solitude. Gloomy and desponding, he wandered on, unmindful whether he was straying, until he reached the summit of a hill, which overlooked the neighbouring landscape. The sun was sinking behind the mountains, whose distant peaks, crimsoned by its last rays, seemed melting in the sky. The expiring glory of the day—the soft and melancholy hue of the landscape—the dim and fading appearance of the surrounding objects, were in unison with the feelings of his soul, and arrested his progress for a moment: As he gazed on the scene, his wild and unsettled passions sunk into a mournful sadness. "Alas!" exclaimed Hamet, "how wretched is man! how useless his exertions! how vain are his endeavours to do good! Surely virtue is not worth following, since it leads but to unhappiness; and that pursuit cannot be approved by the Deity, which ever terminates in disappointment." As he raised his eyes from the ground, resolving no longer to continue in so unprofitable a course of life, he beheld a being of a heavenly form standing before him; pity and benevolence beamed from his countenance; he mildly motioned to Hamet, who had fallen at his feet, to arise; and with a voice sweet and melodious as the enchanted music,

which floats at midnight around the benighted traveller, he thus addressed him: "Hamet, thy works and thy virtues have not passed unnoticed. I am now sent to dissipate thy griefs; observe and be wise." As he spoke, he presented to his view a small mirror, which he held in his hand, and bade him mark what he saw. Hamet obeyed, and beheld a pallid and emaciated wretch, chained down to the floor of a damp and narrow dungeon; hope had fled his languid eyes, which were bent in fixed despair upon his shackles, except, when at intervals, they were raised to heaven in agony, as the thoughts of past joys, or of his disconsolate family, darted, with feverish thrill, through his delirious brain. As he still continued gazing in the mirror, the prisoner vanished, and he beheld, by a dim and feeble light, the wretched chamber of a hovel: upon a low and miserable bed, wasted by disease, and broken-hearted, lay the father of a large family, their hope, their comfort, and their support; the mother, in mute and silent grief, was bending over the dying wretch, in vain endeavouring to soothe his last moments, which were embittered by the cries of his famished children. The heart of Hamet melted within him, and a murmur of discontent was bursting from his lips, when the Genius interrupted him, and bade him observe the mirror once more: he did so, and beheld the prisoner; his chains had fallen off—the dungeon had vanished—his countenance was animated by hope, and joy beamed from his eye. He turned again, and beheld the family which was lately sunk in misery; health and peace now brightened every face; plenty smiled around, and joy and content gladdened the humble mansion. "Observe," said his

heavenly instructor, as he still continued gazing with inexpressible delight on the scene of happiness, "and tell me, is there then no pleasure in doing good? is there then no joy in being the author of so much happiness? would not the reflection of having, by thy exertions, been the cause of such felicity to others, more than compensate for every discouragement thou hast met with? Raise now thine eyes, (said he,) and behold the landscape at thy feet." Hamet obeyed, and beheld a fruitful plain, watered by innumerable little rills, whose banks were covered with flowers, and whose courses were distinctly marked by the verdure which skirted them; plenty waved in the surrounding fields; and the songs of the birds, that had sought the trees on their banks, were heard in unison with the noise of the waters, as they murmured over golden pebbles. While he was yet gazing on the fertile plain which lay stretched before him, he heard the sound of rushing waters and the roaring of cataracts; he turned to the spot whence the noise proceeded, and beheld a majestic river, rolling its turbulent waves over a neighbouring plain, and sweeping every thing before it in its course. The country which was immediately contiguous to its banks, was fertile and beautiful; but that which was more removed, presented one continual scene of sterility, where neither verdure delighted the eye, nor variety charmed the imagination.

As he gazed on the scene, without being able to unravel the meaning of what he saw, the Genius thus addressed him: "The landscape before thee, is a just representation of the ways of Providence: Thou there beholdest the scanty rills, clothing the earth with verdure and beauty, as

they wind unmarked along the plain; while on the other hand, where the mighty river presents to thy view its almost boundless waters, the neighbouring country is yet wild and naked. Learn from this, my son, that to do good, it is not necessary to be powerful; grasp not at universal benevolence; but content thyself in making those around thee happy: repine not that thy power is limited, but make the best use of that which Providence has bestowed upon thee. Return again, my son, to the pursuit of virtue; let thy life be employed in doing good, and happiness will most assuredly be thy lot: Though the clouds of envy and injustice may, for a time, obscure the good man's course, they will soon break from around him; happiness and esteem will shine in their full splendour upon his head; and when the evening of life arrives, an approving conscience will gild the last scene of his earthly career, and open to his enraptured sight the seats of the blessed beyond the grave."

Z. A.

SHOULD a learned man, in a mixed company, make a remark which might display his erudition, all would charge him with pedantry—with a vanity and conceit, of the most heinous nature. But should a soldier, or a sailor, interlard the whole of his conversation with technical phrases, equally, or perhaps, more intended to make an ostentatious display of knowledge, and equally above the comprehension of the company, the men would admire, and the women be pleased with him. Yet why should the same disposition be most blamed, where it is certainly most useful? Only because we bear the superiority, in one case, without en-

vy; but think learning more valuable, and, of course, more an object of desire. But certainly the pedantry of learning, is much the most useful to society; and, therefore, has a reasonable claim to greater indulgence and superior lenity.

POETRY.

JULY.

BORN on the balmy zephyr's wing,
July sports in the place of spring;
And with its gaudy, splendid train,
Adorns once more the hill and plain:
The earth, with smiling blessings crown'd,
Scatters its fragrant incense 'round;
The gentle breezes, sportive play
Along the flow'ry, meadowy way;
Ascending oft the mountain's side,
The oak tree nods in haughty pride;
Then flitting through the leafy grove,
In wanton turns they playful rove.
The morning twilight shooting high,
Declares "the king of day" is nigh.
A soothing calm to this succeeds;
The dews sleep peaceful on the meads;
Nor on the ear do sounds encroach;
Nature seems waiting his approach:
He comes in glorious majesty,
And Nature from her charm is free:
Joy smiles around, while dale and hill
All creatures with their voices fill,
The lark, ascending to the sky,
His salutation gives on high.
That nobler part of man—the mind,
Springs forth superior, unconfin'd;
And owning a superior nod,
Through nature looks to nature's God.
But rolling high, the scorching sun
One half his daily course has run;
Beneath his rays all nature droops,
While broadening down to earth he stoops;
Far in the west dark clouds arise,
Concealing there the azure skies;
Along the hills and o'er the plains,
An universal stillness reigns.
The lightning, in its rapid flight,
Through heav'n now streams with lustre bright;
While roll along the thick'ning clouds,
The glorious sun their darkness shrouds;

Now from their bosoms, fast and thick,
Each drop succeeds the other quick:
All things enjoy the cooling shower,
While now its streaming torrents pour;
The noisy streamlets foam along,
While echoes still the sounds prolong.
The shower has pass'd; with gayer light,
No-fancied beauties meet the sight,
With livelier hue, with brighter glow,
Nature revives and shines—below;
Above the rays reflected show
The splendid glories of the bow.
The setting sun, with fainter rays,
His daily debt to nature pays;
Smiling, he sinks while shooting high,
His beams resplendent gem the sky.
May we, like him, our journey close,
Yielding our life in soft repose;
A prelude to that happier day,
From which no night excludes a ray.

O.

THE SABBATH.

1.

ONCE more, the Sabbath's cheerful dawn,
Awakes my soul to praise the Lord;
Business, and cares, and noise are gone,
And leave me to his sacred word.

2.

This glorious day the Saviour rose—
He burst the iron bars of death;
Trampling upon his powerful foes,
He rose, and drew immortal breath.

3.

Enter the palace of the skies,
In all thy pomp, thou King of kings;
A thousand seraphs wait, to rise
And bear thy triumph on their wings.

4.

Ye heav'nly harps of gold resound;
Your noblest anthems join to raise;
And to creation's utmost bound
Spread the immortal song of praise.

5.

O that this lower world might pay
Its grateful tribute to our God,
And join its everlasting lay
To him who bought us with his blood.

6.

Let not our hearts refuse to bring
Their homage of adoring love;
But learn, with humbler powers, to sing
The lofty hymns you sound above.

G.